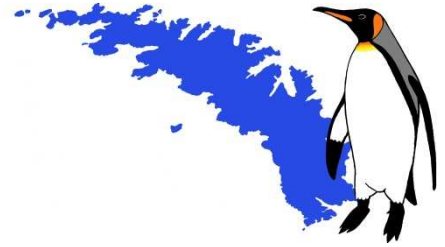


South Georgia Association Newsletter

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The Spring Meeting & AGM will be on April 28, 2017



Moraine Fjord (photo by Sam Crimmin).

The Fifteenth Annual General Meeting, 29 April 2016.

Held at the Royal Over-Seas League, London.

The meeting was attended by 49 members, including the following members of the Committee: David Tatham (President), David Drewry (Chair), John Owen (Treasurer), John Mills (Membership Secretary, Robert Burton (Newsletter Editor), Paul Rodhouse (Events), Alexandra Shackleton, Bob Headland, Dave Fletcher, David Rootes and Fran Prince (Secretary).

David Drewry welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially James Jansen, the Chief Executive Officer of GSGSSI; Roisin Hayes the SGSSI Desk Officer, Polar Regions Department at the FCO; the new Chairman of SGHT, Philippa Foster-Back; and Kjell Tokstad and Thomas Binnie from Øyas Venner.

Apologies were received from 26 members, including committee members Sarah Greenwood, Bill Block, Ron Lewis-Smith. Apologies were also received from the Commissioner, Colin Roberts.

The minutes of the Fourteenth AGM held on 22 May 2015 were approved as a true record of the meeting (proposed by Bob Headland and seconded by Alexandra Shackleton) and were signed by the Chair. There were no matters arising that were not covered in other Agenda items.

The Chair welcomed all SGA friends and colleagues to the Spring meeting and AGM.

The committee had decided to reduce the number of individual officer reports, and the main points from the year's activities were covered in the Chairman's report.

The 2015 AGM was attended by 58 members and guests. The talk given by John Smellie *The South Sandwich Islands – the world's most remote active volcanic arc, hostile to mankind, a paradise for wildlife* was a fascinating account of our little visited neighbouring islands.

The Edinburgh event took place in October attended by 83 guests, and was a tremendous success. Bruce Mair

and colleagues did a wonderful job creating a memorable two days of whisky tasting, fascinating lectures and tour of the 'penguin encounter' at the zoo.

The Association has been left a generous legacy of £10,000 in the will of a former member, Miss Morag Husband Campbell. There have been no specific instructions on its use, and the committee has been discussing suggestions. Further suggestions were requested from SGA members at the meeting.

Interactions continue with GSGSSI and FCO. Committee members attended the FCO Stakeholders Meeting in the September. SGA also responded to GSGSSI consultations during the year, including input and comment on the Five-Year Strategy, compiled and submitted by David Rootes; and the Biodiversity Action Plan with significant input from the Chair.

Two issues of the Newsletter have been produced this year and delivered electronically. The Chairman thanked Bob Burton for his tireless work in producing a first rate publication full of news, events and short and interesting articles. Members were requested to send material of interest about South Georgia to Bob for consideration. Keith Holmes was thanked for his continued generous donation to the publication costs.

Bill Block has revamped the application form for the SGA Initiative Funding, and the form is available on the website. Members were reminded that the Association has funds available for small grants to support initiatives related to South Georgia.

Sarah Greenwood is continuing to support SGA through her work on Facebook. Andy Rankin, due to pressures of his business, has reluctantly stepped down from the committee, but is continuing to help maintain the SGA website.

SGA is delighted that two well-known South Georgia individuals, Kim Crosbie and Jérôme Poncet were awarded the Polar Medal during the last year for their significant contribution to South Georgia.

Finally, the Chairman reported that as promised the Association gave a prize of a bottle of Champagne to the first person to locate a pipit nest on Thatcher Peninsula, and this was given to Jamie Coleman.

The Chair invited questions; there were none.

The audited accounts had been circulated. John Owen, the Treasurer summarised the SGA finances for the meeting: the year had started with circa £20,000 in the account, and remained the same. Members' subscriptions cover the costs of the newsletter and AGM. The £20,000 does represent subscriptions paid in advance. Costs of events break even; larger events such as the Edinburgh weekend do involve a risk with having to provide funds in advance – e.g. £5000.

No increase in subscription was suggested.

The Chair asked if there were any questions for the Treasurer on the accounts. There were none.

James Jansen read the message from the Commissioner.

Greetings from Stanley to all at the SGA AGM,

I am sorry not to be in London with you, but you have our Chief Executive who will have corrected any errors in this message and will stand ready to answer any difficult questions you may have. I hope you will agree that we have seen a very smooth transition in the Chief Executive role and that, taken with other staffing changes, the Government has been able to maintain its high level of achievement and improve operations in a number of areas.

I hope you all feel that you have had an opportunity to feed into the formulation of Government policies, whether in the Strategy out to 2020 or in more specific documents such as the crucial Biosecurity Action Plan. They set a range of challenges and we have been frank throughout that we can only meet these with the engagement and support of partners. We are fortunate to have a number of excellent partners, such as the SGA, which help bring together organisations and individuals who collectively have far more experience of South Georgia and its concerns than can ever be possible for the Government of the day. We welcome your ideas and are always open to new ways of working together.

We hope in the period ahead to broaden our collaboration with international partners, including the international scientific community and the administrations of other sub-Antarctic islands. This is partly about sharing our expertise and achievements, but also a recognition that as we make progress on issues like habitat restoration, the management of the MPAs and other aspects of the 'domestic' agenda, the risks and threats from outside our jurisdiction (IUU fishing, by catch, toxins in the water column, krill movements, climate change) require more of our attention.

We were very fortunate in January this year to be able to host a visit by HRH The Princess Royal to the Territory, together with other distinguished guests. This enabled us to highlight our achievements and, by bringing together a group of committed supporters, identify new ways to achieve our shared objectives. It was also, I have to admit, great fun.

I wish you all a successful meeting and look forward to seeing many of you at the Shackleton memorial events next month.

Colin

The Chair asked if there were any questions:

Richard Ralph: Is there a cap on cruise ship visits to South Georgia?

A: No cap on cruise ship visits. GSGSSI do have to assess the impact on South Georgia of 9000 visitors. They are aware of economies of scale/increase in ship size

David Drewry: Small yachts have an important role in tourism and science on the island. Are they being excluded or will there still be a place for them?

A: GSGSSI is mindful of the importance of small yachts. They will be addressed in the review process. Policy needs to be fit for all visitors.

The Chairman thanked James Jansen and the Commissioner for their contribution to the meeting. SGA value their comments.

International Reports and Report from South Georgia Heritage Trust

Philippa Foster-Back, Chair of SGHT reported on SGHT activities. Howard Pearce was thanked and congratulated for being Chairman for almost a decade. Also present were Alison Neil and Tony Martin – Tony had just been awarded 'Conservationist of the Year' by the Zoological Society of London.

Philippa had visited South Georgia with HRH Princess Anne, and thanked all who live on South Georgia for making them welcome.

The Rat Eradication was now into the monitoring phase. Baiting had proved successful, and Tony was now organising the monitoring using 'Rat dogs' that had been used successfully on Macquarie. SGHT are aiming to raise £350,000 for the monitoring phase

Peter Harrison reported that on 17 April, there were 18 pipits on Salisbury Plain and 176 pintails in Fortuna Bay.

SGHT have a new Heritage Advisory Panel and are hoping to announce a major Heritage Project. The Centenary Service for Sir Ernest Shackleton was mentioned. This takes place on 20 May at Westminster Abbey and can be booked on Eventbrite.

Philippa closed by registering the close relationship with SGA, and her thanks to be part of the polar family.

Kjell Tokstad, Chair of Øyas Venner since 2000, reported there are 300 members of Friends of the Island, many are former whalers. Their activities include trying to keep whalers' graves in good condition. They are also restoring a whaler from South Georgia now at Sandefjord, sister-ship to *Albatros*, and in need of spare parts.

Tourism is important and Øyas Venner co-operate with Hertigruten on cruises. Øyas Venner will celebrate their annual meeting on 23 April and will send an invitation to SGA.

David Drewry thanked both Philippa and Kjell for their reports; and thanked all the committee for their work with SGA during the last year.

Election of committee members and officers

The Committee stood aside for the President of the Association, David Tatham, to take the Chair. David thanked members for attending and the Chairman and committee for their work on behalf of the SGA over the past year. The re-election of the committee was proposed by Richard Ralph and seconded by Patrick Fagan. The meeting voted in favour of all to be re-elected.

Chairman: David Drewry

Secretary: Fran Prince

Treasurer: John Owen

Membership Secretary: John Mills

Newsletter editor: Bob Burton

Members: Bob Headland, Sarah Greenwood, Dave Fletcher, David Rootes, Alexandra Shackleton, Ron Lewis-Smith, Bill Block, Paul Rodhouse

Corresponding Members: Jan Cheek (Stanley), Sarah Lurcock (KEP)

Any other business

Michael Buchanan who had been a member since 2001 (and whose Great-great Grandfather was Christian Salvesen) commented on the number of visitors to South Georgia who may be susceptible to recruitment to SGA. Considering 9000 visitors, if 1% joined up this would double our membership. His suggestions included a promotional flyer and poster available at the South Georgia Museum; new members be given a pack of South Georgia interest material, eg. selected articles from past SGA newsletters. What is the impact on the island of increase in visitor numbers? SGA should be kept informed via IAATO meetings.

The meeting ended at 7.50pm and was followed by a lecture by Dr Tom Hart from Oxford University *Spies in our midst: Camera-Based Conservation of the Southern Ocean*.

Fran Prince, Secretary, 10 May 2015

Toothfish Day: One for your diary!

The Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI) celebrated Toothfish Day on September 4 with a reception and quiz at Government House.

The national holiday, which marks the end of the toothfish fishing season in South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, was created to acknowledge the importance of the Patagonian Toothfish fishery to the government and to highlight the challenges of promoting and managing sustainability, ecosystem conservation and the fight against illegal fishing of not only this commercially valuable fish, but of all illegal fishing in the world's oceans.

In marking Toothfish Day, GSGSSI extended its gratitude to all its stakeholders and partners for their work

and collaboration in the 2016 toothfish fishing season and looked forward to continued strong relationships in the coming year.

Although Toothfish Day is officially September 4, the Stanley event this year was held on the 6th.

The government is entering into its 12th year of Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification recognising the highest standards in sustainability, management and conservation. 2016 has seen a year of continued improvements in how the fishery is run across all aspects. This is done through close collaboration with scientists, governments, NGOs and the fishing industry directly.

Improvements across the fishery include:

More precautionary management of the stock

Industry-lead improvements in conservation and fishing operations

Improved safety standards of vessels and their crews

Government and Industry collaboration on science across the fleet

Streamlining and modernising fisheries law and regulation

Cutting edge science and monitoring across the South Georgia sustainable-use Marine Protected Area, one of the largest in the world.

Find out more about South Georgia toothfish on www.gov.gs, www.msc.org, www.colto.org, and www.ccamlr.org.

From a GSGSSI Press Release

Puppy on the roof



We knew the whalers were good at making use of scarce resources but them using elephant seal puppy for building purposes came as a surprise. When the GSGSSI building team was recently replacing some old wiggly tin sheets on the roof of the main store, a skin washer in very good condition was revealed from beneath the ridge line. Taxidermist Steve Massam, who is working at the SG Museum, said it was made from seal; it still has the hair on. He also thinks that the thinness of the skin and hair type indicates it was made from elephant seal puppy skin. Leather washers have been noted on other old buildings at Grytviken, but it had not been realised that some were so locally sourced. The washer has been saved in the SG Museum collection.

Sarah Lurcock

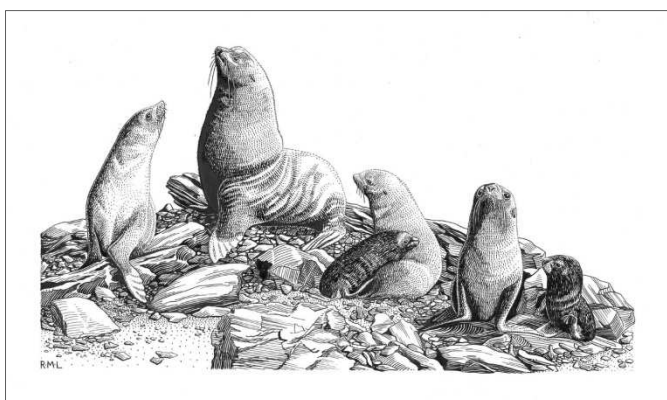
Dick Laws: Antarctic scientist and artist

An exhibition of artwork by the late Dick Laws (1926-2014), largely focussed on its links and contributions to his career and scientific research, will be held at the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI) from Wednesday 1 March to Saturday 25 March 2017.

As well as being an outstanding scientist, a leading expert on large mammals and a former Director of the British Antarctic Survey, Dick was a consummate artist. Although the line drawings illustrating his scientific papers are reasonably well-known, his sketches, drawings and paintings of Antarctic wildlife and scenery remain very little known or appreciated.

This exhibition will feature works from his early years, his time at Signy Island and South Georgia and his later years visiting the Antarctic when BAS Director. In illustrating the development and use of his artistic skills, it also pays tribute to an exceptional individual.

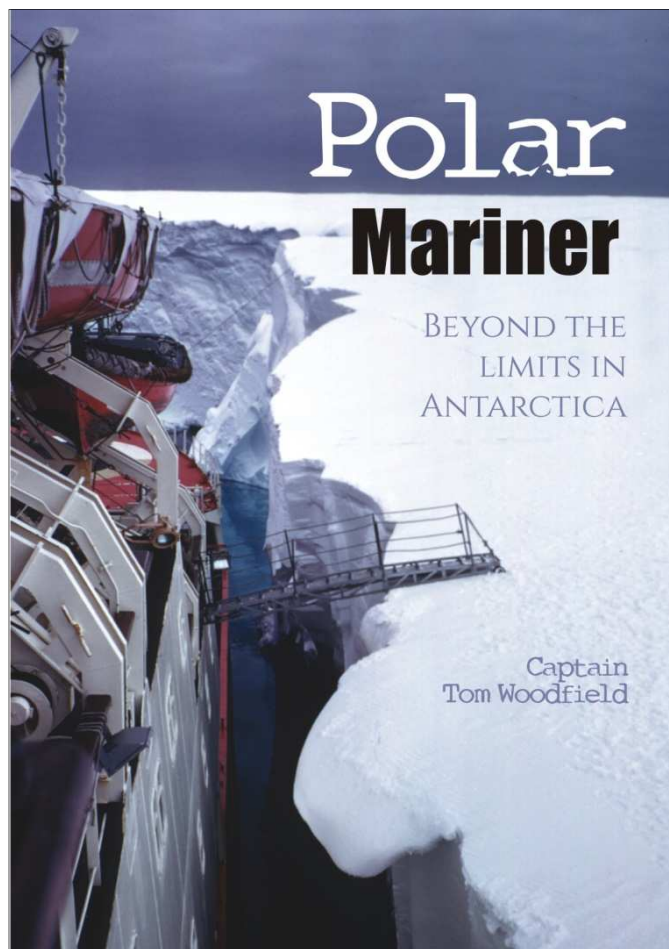
The exhibition is funded by a generous donation from the SGA, as well as contributions from the SGHT, UKAHT and BAS Club.



Further details will be sent out nearer the opening.

Polar Mariner: Beyond the Limits in Antarctica

Captain Tom Woodfield. 2016. Whittles Publishing
ISBN 978-1-84995-166-1. 202 pages. 55 illus. £18.99



Tom Woodfield writes about his experiences working in the Antarctic over a period of 20 years that begins in 1955 with commissioning RRS *Shackleton* to work in support of the expanding Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (FIDS) in the wake of Operation Tabarin, and ends in 1974 when he left what had become the British Antarctic Survey after the fourth voyage of RRS *Bransfield*. He notes in his epilogue that he had been 'fortunate to join FIDS when there was still some contact with the heroic age of exploration' and the book is peppered both with reference to the people (nearly all men) who had surveyed and researched in the area, and with accounts of mishaps and adventures of his own.

The book is written in an engaging style but with considerable detail. Many nautical and geographical terms are included, but these are explained by footnotes for those readers who do not know how long a shackle is or what happens if you grip a dodger in freezing conditions. The first chapter sets the scene for the next eleven, each of which describes one or more voyages, first on *Shackleton*, then on the second *John Biscoe* and finally on *Bransfield*, which Captain Woodfield designed and whose build he supervised.

The story starts with a 14 year-old Tom making a half-hearted attempt to run away to sea, followed by a year at Warash School of Navigation before joining the Port Line at the age of 16. After sitting further exams, he responded to an advertisement: 'Full crew wanted for an Antarctic Expedition Ship – no polar experience necessary!' He joined RRS *Shackleton*, then being refitted in Denmark to join the original (wooden) *John Biscoe* in the FIDS 'fleet'.

Obviously, the geographical spread of the book is as extensive as its time period, and readers of this journal will need to spend time reading about other parts of the world before they encounter accounts of events at South Georgia. Some 40 pages into the book is the first visit to Grytviken, still an active whaling station in the late 1950s and before the establishment of the British research station. This episode is enlivened by the brief incarceration of an explorer and actor (well known to South Georgia aficionados) for disruptive behaviour on board. Interestingly, later in the same voyage, he notes the observation of a small number of fur seals in one of the South Orkney Islands, commenting that they were close to extinction. How times change!

On the second voyage of the *Shackleton*, passage was provided between Stanley and Grytviken for 750 sheep, a few pigs and the Anglican Bishop of South America and the Falkland Islands. Apparently, seafaring folklore 'warns of carrying a pig and a parson at the same time' and 'several pigs, a bishop and several hundred sheep' did indeed provoke a very rough passage to South Georgia on this occasion. Another whaling station, Stromness, has an important part in a later incident with the *Shackleton*, when the ship had to be repaired after being holed by ice near the South Shetland Islands, some 500 miles away. This part of the book sits in the tradition of earlier polar exploration.

The book continues with further voyages of the *Shackleton*, alongside the 'new' *John Biscoe*, which Woodfield joined as Chief Officer three years after she was commissioned, taking command five years later. The narrative is richly illustrated with personal anecdotes alongside the more practical aspects of the ship's work, and sprinkled with more dramatic events such as the Deception Island eruption.

In 1966, after some years of uncertainty, FIDS became the British Antarctic Survey under the newly-formed Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). The consolidation included replacing RRS *Shackleton* with a new expedition vessel, RRS *Bransfield*. The final section of the main part of the book covers the design and build, followed by three voyages. Much of *Bransfield's* efforts were devoted to Halley station deep in the Weddell Sea, but she visited South Georgia regularly to supply the BAS stations at Grytviken and Bird Island, as well as supporting field parties on other parts of the island. There is an extensive account of the island, its landscape, fauna and flora, written with clarity and enthusiasm. Then, berthed at Grytviken, Capt Woodfield received the news

that he had been elected to the Board of Trinity House – news that brings his Antarctic seafaring to a close.

The book closes with an epilogue. This draws together the threads running through the book, and makes comparisons between the start of the story in the 1950s and the present day. Some changes are welcomed, but others are regretted and you sense that Tom Woodfield feels that he left at the right time. Not that he settled into retirement. As well as his appointment to Trinity House, he has taken part in the Southern Ocean leg of the Round The World yacht race, supported Sir Ranulph Fiennes' Transglobe expedition, and ventured into polar logistics and tourism.

The book is well-written and illustrated. It has an engaging mixture of the nautical and the personal (sometimes starkly personal), with added doses of history, science and politics. The layout is clear and readable, although the slightly quirky typography of the chapter headings is a little distracting. Because it ranges so widely and is structured chronologically, an index would have been a useful supplement for someone wanting to dip into the book, but it is really best read from cover to cover.

Julian Priddle

Support SGHT into the future



The South Georgia Heritage Trust is inviting its supporters to become Guardians of South Georgia. This is a new initiative which SGHT hopes will safeguard the future of the charity and its work, ensuring a bright future

for South Georgia's wildlife and heritage.

As a Guardian of South Georgia, you will help us complete the Habitat Restoration Project and protect the future of the islands' seabirds. You'll make an important contribution to future conservation work through a regular donation to the South Georgia Heritage Trust.

You can choose to join the team of one of the four species of penguin found on South Georgia, or sign up for a special lifetime Albatross membership.

Become a Guardian and protect South Georgia's future at <http://www.sght.org/guardians/>

Swarming birds!

Sarah Lurcock reports that in the early spring pipits were singing all day long at KEP. There are many more sheathbills and clouds of Wilson's storm petrels had been seen. Elsewhere flocks of hundreds of pintails have been seen and pipits are becoming commonplace.

They're giving out medals at Buckingham Palace

In the last issue we described the achievements of Kim Crosbie and Jérôme Poncet that led to the award of Polar Medals. On 22 April they went to the Palace to receive their medals from Prince William, who averted a crisis when Kim got her legs muddled while curtsying.



Meanwhile friends were gathering outside the gates and their cheers when the medallists appeared attracted the attention of the throng of sightseers and resulted in Kim posing for selfies.



The day South Georgia moved



Not always so serene as it looks.

'Did you feel that?'...I was propped up on one elbow in bed addressing my husband, but my brain was already a step ahead of my enquiry. I had already worked out that the odd slow and repeated push-pull motion I had felt the bed make must have been the result of an earthquake.

The movement had been sufficient to wake Pat up.

Later we heard that others at the KEP base had been woken. Everson House, the long narrow building that is the main KEP accommodation, is built on concrete pillars and the ground movement had rocked the building from side to side.

Nothing else happened so I quickly subsided back into sleep, but on waking again I was soon on the computer looking up the American USGS Earthquake Hazards Program website. It showed that what we had felt was the result of a big earthquake in a usually seismically-quiet spot on the Scotia Arc between South Georgia and the very seismically-active South Sandwich Islands. The main quake was a 7.4 M (=Magnitude) jolt centred just 316 km east-south-east of South Georgia at 05:32 local time, at 55.279°S, 31.874°W, and at a depth of 10.0 km.

The USGS website stated that the earthquake 'occurred as the result of shallow thrust faulting near the plate boundary between the South America and Scotia plates....At the location of this earthquake, the South America plate moves towards the west-southwest with respect to the Scotia plate at a rate of just 9 mm/yr.' It also said 'earthquakes of this size are more appropriately described as slip over a larger fault area. Thrust faulting events of the size of the August 19, 2016 earthquake are typically about 70x35 km in size (length x width).'

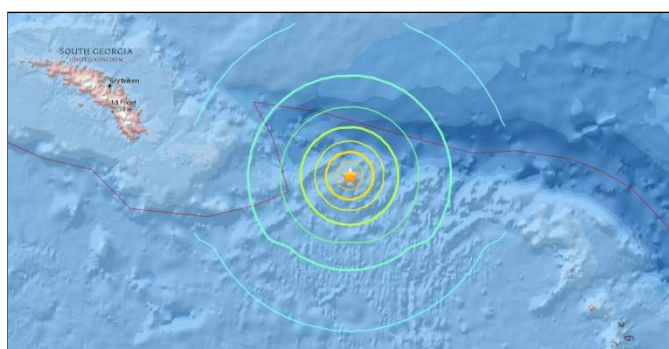
Throughout the day various people at KEP thought they might have felt aftershocks, although I can't say I felt anything more. Sure enough, the USG map showed that several significant earthquakes (aftershocks) in excess of 4.5M had occurred in the same region in the following 24 hours; five in the first hour and more than 15 within the 24 hours. There have since been 74 quakes in the area in

excess of 4.5M, the next largest another whopping 6.4M nearly in the same spot and 44 hours later. If you like bigger numbers (and I do) then there have been 1,334 earthquakes in excess of 2.5M in 30 days, and the area is still rumbling with two earthquakes of 4.9M in the last week.

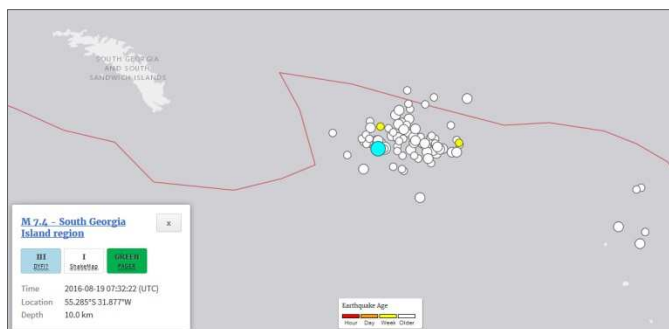
What about the risk of a tsunami after such a big earthquake? Well, unlike the *Mirror* website headline 'Tsunami fears after massive 7.3 magnitude earthquake hits British territory in Atlantic Ocean', there was no noticeable event, although the tide-gauge reading did show an interesting but small oscillation a few hours after the earthquake.

Sarah Lurcock

Note: The magnitude scale is exponential so that a 7M earthquake is 10 times bigger than 6M.



Map taken from the USGS website shows where the main earthquake was centred. South Georgia is to the left edge of the map and the tip of the more seismically active South Sandwich Islands can be seen to the bottom right of the map.



The cluster of earthquakes can be seen on the map taken from the USGS website. The blue one is the primary quake.

From the archives



This is very likely the first photograph taken of a football game at South Georgia. 'Colours' are playing 'Whites'. The ball can be located from the attitudes of the players.

The 'pitch' is on Hestesletten with Penguin River just visible behind the players.

The photo is in the collection of Andreas Eriksen, skipper of the whalecatcher *Röss* at Grytviken from 1912 to 1915. The photo below shows Eriksen at the cannon. Note the two smaller cannons on each side of the bow. These were for harpooning bottlenosed whales but were rarely used.



Survey report starts race against time to salvage *Viola*

The *Viola* Trust is working to bringing the historic steam trawler back to her home on the Humber and is set to step up its fund-raising efforts following a positive survey of her condition.

Paul Escreet, chair of the trustees, said: "The results of the survey which has been carried out into the condition of *Viola* were very encouraging and they demonstrated to us that the project is still possible.

'But they also indicated that the salvage operation has to be done within a relatively short time scale. We can't leave this for another five years because by then things will have gone too far. It is essential that we act now.

'We are appealing to businesses and to individuals – particularly to anyone with a maritime connection, a link to Hull's remarkable heritage and an interest in supporting engineering and education – to support our campaign. We will be organising a wide range of opportunities to raise funds and will publicise our progress through the Trust's website at www.ViolaTrawler.net'.

Solis Marine Consultants have completed their survey of the vessel. John Simpson, who spent two days inspecting *Viola* with his colleague Rosalind Spink, said: 'One of the things we had to try and establish was the curvature and shape of the hull because we'll need to bring in a cradle to lift her. Parts of the hull lie in the beach and parts in the seabed. We were able to use plumb lines and a tape measure to calculate the curvature around the stern.

'We could then prepare a computer model which will greatly assist when it comes to looking at salvage methods and transport. We now know a lot more about the ship and are much more confident. Ros was able to get much of the information she needed about the structural condition to make an assessment and give the salvage companies the information they need.'

The *Viola* Trust is grateful for the support of the Royal Navy and in particular the company of HMS *Clyde*, the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and the British Antarctic Survey team based at King Edward Point.

The *Viola* Trust has appointed a funding expert and set up a website as it campaigns to raise an initial £1.5 million to lift the ship off the beach and onto a cargo ship before making the 7,000-mile trip back to the Humber.

The Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands has given its approval for *Viola* to take a starring role in Hull City's proposed new maritime heritage displays. Once the ship is back in British waters, the Trust's target plans to raise a further £1.5 million to set up an innovative apprenticeship scheme, giving people the skills to restore *Viola* as an education centre and a lasting memorial to those who lost their lives in the war at sea.

From a Press Release

Major Incident Exercise

A series of preliminary training exercises in recent months culminated in a Major Incident Exercise, which was held at King Edward Point. The main objectives were to test the Government's incident plan and the ability of the KEP station team, with limited capacity, to receive and implement the medical triage of survivors landed ashore following a major incident on a vessel. Overseen by the Government Officers, the exercise was principally intended to be a learning experience for all involved and this was also an opportunity to engage staff in the Falkland Islands and review the Government's major incident stores at Grytviken and KEP.

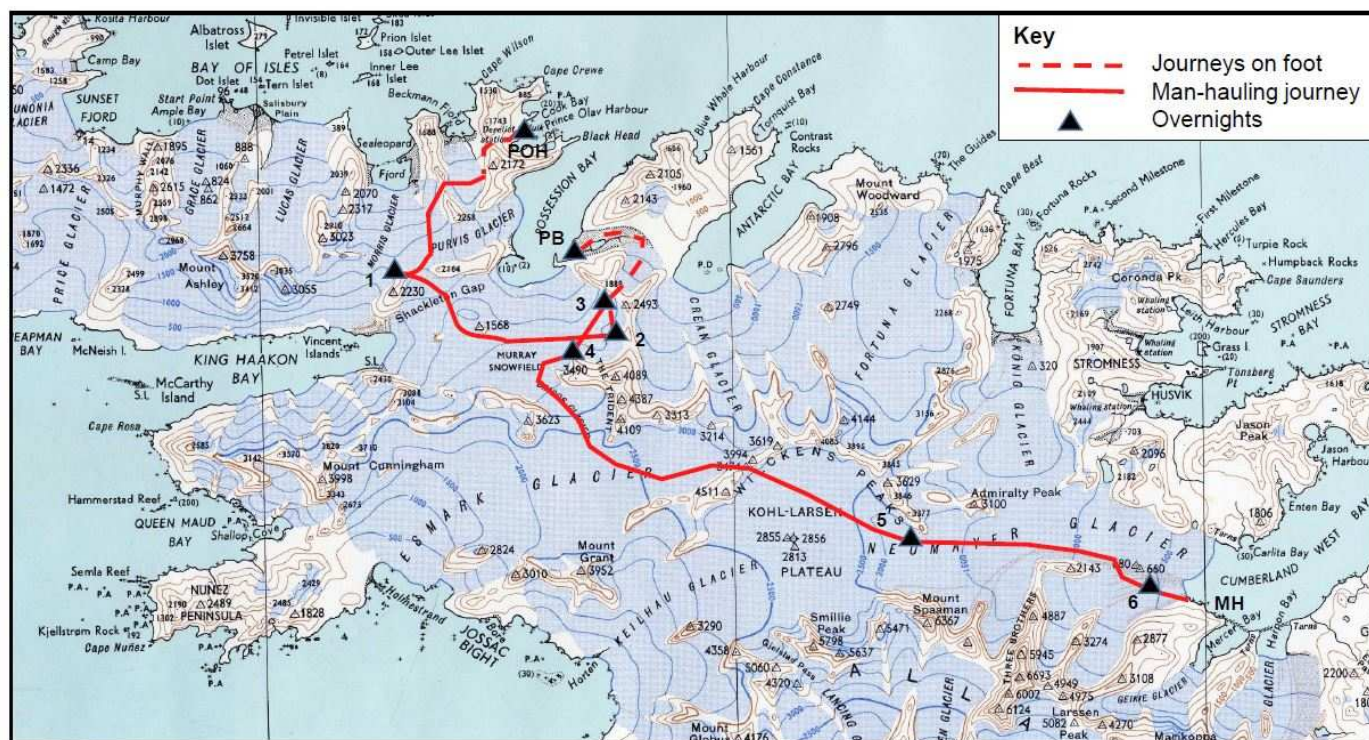
The exercise was supported throughout by the visiting warship HMS *Clyde*. For the purpose of the exercise, HMS *Clyde* assumed the role of a stricken fishing vessel, with the ship's company taking on the part of incident survivors with varying degrees of injuries. HMS *Clyde*'s officers were also able to provide oversight and an assessment of the exercise, whilst they themselves gained a much better understanding of the incident response capabilities ashore.

The scale of the exercise would not have been possible without the support of HMS *Clyde* and valuable lessons were identified. GSGSSI's thanks go to HMS *Clyde*'s Commanding Officer and all the ship's company for their assistance

From the GSGSSI newsletter. Photos Simon Browning



In Shackleton's footsteps (sort of)



Map of our journey; we spent overnights as follows: POH (Prince Olav Harbour) 11/2/77-5/3/77, in one of the station huts; PB (Possession Bay) 7/3/77-12/3/77, in a depoted pyramid tent; Camp 1 5/3/77; Camp 2 6/3/77; Camp 3 12/3/77; Camp 4 13/3/77; Camp 5 14/3/77; Camp 6 15/3/77; MH (Middle Head) pick-up 16/3/77.

It is actually quite easy to cross South Georgia. Up at the north end of the island, it is a half-hour stroll from Elsehul to Undine Harbour; Right Whale Bay to Ice Fjord is a bit trickier but you can do it in an afternoon; and one of the easiest of all is King Haakon Bay to Possession Bay – three or four hours will see you across. All of these are 'crossings of South Georgia', but in the public mind, they are not 'The Crossing of South Georgia' the hallowed route that Shackleton, Worsley and Crean walked on 19-20 May 1916.

In the 1976-77 season, Geoff Tanner (working on the north-east coast), and I (on the south-west) had established that there were distinct differences in geology of the Cumberland Bay Formation on the opposing coasts, but we had little idea of where the transition occurred. So the possibility of going inland was left open in planning the season's fieldwork. John Jewell, my GA (general assistant), and I started the season camped on the north side of Queen Maud Bay.

Most of the rest of our season was to be spent mapping the north end of the island and we mapped our way from our main camp on the Bay of Isles to Elsehul. Sadly, we lost a day to bad weather on the outward leg, arriving at the Elsehul hut the day after the *Linblad Explorer*, complete with Scandinavian stewardesses, had visited. Our disappointment was compounded when we found a woman's glove, delicately scented with a rather nice perfume, in a penguin colony.

We left Elsehul, and the glove, and mapped our way back to Rosita Harbour. *John Biscoe* moved us from Rosita to Prince Olav Harbour on 11 January 1977, where we were expected to stay until the end of season. *Biscoe* laid a depot for us on the south side of Possession Bay and we were left with a manhaul sledge for local work. So a foray inland became a possibility.

There was only one hut still standing at Prince Olav Harbour and it became our home for three weeks while we worked on the detailed geology of Point Abrahamsen, north of the station. There was a lovely path inland for a couple of kilometres, with cuttings and culverts, climbing round the contours with a steady gradient – built by Norwegian whalers for winter skiing. This was a boon to John as he made two journeys across to the edge of the Austin Glacier to make a depot of food, fuel and equipment. The 5th dawned bright and clear, we said farewell to our hut. By 11:00 we had reached the depot, packed the sledge and we were off – first to the other side of Possession Bay, and then on, we hoped.

That first day was the fiddliest part of the route. The sledge had to be manhandled through the crevasses of the Austin, and then we had a steep climb up to the col that led across to the Morris Glacier.

Dawn on the 6th was calm and clear and we had an early start to our journey round the nameless peak to the saddle above Shackleton Gap. We headed for the Murray Snowfield on rock-hard surfaces in gathering overcast and with a rising west wind.



Crossing the Esmark Glacier.

Crossing the mouth of the Briggs Glacier was difficult, with a strong wind blowing down from the south-west. I had to tie onto the upwind side to keep the sledge straight while John provided the forward momentum. As soon as we were past the glacier the wind dropped and we continued uphill in bright sunshine and on deteriorating surfaces to reach the basin at the east end of the Murray Snowfield. We camped at 16:00 and set off to explore the first two cols through the Razorback, a ridge off The Trident. Both had large icefalls on the east side, and the bottom could not be seen – it was immediately clear why Shackleton had rejected these as a route. The Crean Glacier was heavily crevassed, with no snow cover below 1,000 ft and numerous melt pools. This was clearly not the route for us. We retreated to our little tent which then it did its best to kill us.

It was my turn to make the tea – revoltingly early, since we aimed to leave before dawn to head down to Possession Bay. When the alarm rang I nearly rolled over and ignored it, but I forced myself to kneel up to light the stove. The match flared and died. I was feeling horrible, with a splitting headache and did not need this. I got another match and the same thing happened; I repeated this with the 15 matches left in the box, always with the same result. John was deeply asleep and there was a huge temptation to lie back down, but the new box of matches was in the outside bag, so I wrestled my way out of the tent and the rush of cold oxygen-laden air cleared my head. It had snowed in the night, sealing around the bottom of the tent, we had closed the door tightly, and the main vent had blown shut, so we were lying in a carbon monoxide casserole. – if the spare box of matches had been inside, I would still be there watching them flare and die.

When we set off north across the snowfield, we came to Shackleton's 'battleship-sized' bergschrund where we made a depot of most of our gear, marked by a 7 ft snow pillar, and took a detour to have a look down Shackleton's slide:– a convex slope, very icy and impossible to see what was coming.

We crossed the col north onto the glacier that flows down to the peninsula between Possession and Antarctic



Camp 2 on the Murray Snowfield. The Razorback in the background was a major barrier for Shackleton.

Bays. We spent the next six nights working from our depot on Possession Bay in some shocking weather, with gales from the west and lots of rain. During this time the met station at KEP recorded a wind speed of 80 knots – a record at the time. Rock exposure was not very good and we were not really adding to the geological story, so we decided to head back up to the high depot and then work around The Trident. We aimed to cross the Esmark Glacier to the Kohl Plateau and then head down to Carlita Bay. At this point, we had not 'shared' this thought with anyone in authority.

On 12 March we went back up to the Murray Snowfield, camped by the depot for a night and headed over to the mouth of the Briggs Glacier where we camped for a night, pinned down by rain and wind. On the 14th, we set off up the Briggs in the dark, keeping to the middle to avoid big icefalls on either side. The head of the glacier was very hard work and for the first time on the trip we were really aware that we were pulling 200 lbs. The mist rolled away and we stood in bright sunshine with unlimited views in all directions. It was clear that we were not going to get anywhere near The Trident, so we decided to press on to Cumberland Bay. The decision was based on three principles: 1. we really wanted to do it; 2. it is always easier to ask for forgiveness than permission; and 3. Mick Pawley, the professional Base Commander, had already left for the UK and the easy-going Dave Orchard was in charge, so we thought the spanking would be bearable.

Decision made, we manhandled the sledge onto the Esmark Glacier. The surfaces were very hard, but there were very large sastrugi – up to 3 ft high. Fortunately, these were east-west, in our direction of travel, so we rocketed along and climbed towards the obvious col in the Wilckens Peaks. The slope up was very steep, so John ran out a trace length, anchored and pulled with me pushing the sledge from behind; we then anchored the sledge, and repeated. Slow, but we eventually reached the heavily crevassed col.

One unexpected benefit of this process was the chance for me to do some geology and realise that on the south

side of the col the folding in the rocks was like the south-west coast, while to the north, it was tight zigzags like the north-east coast – the sort of folds that Shackleton commented on as he approached Stromness. That col is now called the Zigzag Pass. From here, we could look down on the Crean Glacier, which still looked bad. Turning south, we got our first sight of the Kohl Plateau – which wasn't. The 'Plateau' is a double bowl, with a curving ridge separating the Neumayer and Keilhau Glaciers.



The Kohl Plateau.

For the next two hours we just walked beside the sledge as it ran downhill – the weather was so still and calm that we did not even have to shield the Primus when we stopped for a brew. We camped by the last of the Wilckens Peaks and called KEP. I was beginning to realise how much trouble we might be in for not reporting our intentions, but took a deep breath and told Dave that we had moved camp by 23 kilometres and were now on the Neumayer Glacier, heading for Carlita Bay. No explosion, so ranting, just: 'Oh, and what are you going to do when you get there?'



Camp 6 on the Neumayer Glacier.

We were told to go to Middle Head, where we would be picked up in two days. The next day was slow, portaging the gear through moraines and crevasses. Our last camp

was by the edge of the glacier, only a couple of kilometres from the sea. On the morning of 16 March, we did two journeys taking the gear down to the beach where a young emperor penguin greeted us – only the fourth record from South Georgia. *Albatros* (the KEP launch) came for us at noon and we got our punishment – we would not be going back to KEP for a shower and a nice meal, we were being taken straight to our next field locality at Allen Bay. Overall, I thought it a just punishment.

In eleven days, we had travelled 90 km (not counting geological work). We had seven camps, broke a lot of rules and did it without any mishap. Was it stupid and dangerous? Yes, but we were young. Would I do it again? In a heartbeat.

David Macdonald

Notes from Bird Island

(Courtesy of BAS Icesheet)

Is it a rock? Is it a wave? No, it's a southern right whale!



There have been several sightings of right whales this winter. They are usually a few miles out and marked only by their blow. On 6 June, I had a great surprise whilst I was watching for leopard seals in the waters near the station. I noticed something in the water and initially disregarded it as a rock that I hadn't seen before due to extreme low tides, until it moved and then blew. I called the others from the station and we watched for about 20 minutes from the rocks as the whale rolled and swam back and forth, sometimes within 15 metres of us.

We returned to the station building as the light faded, hoping that we wouldn't see it again, stranded somewhere on a beach. Thankfully in the morning all we found on the beach was a mass of washed-up crustaceans, possibly the reason the whale risked entering the narrow bay in the first place.

It is rare to see whales so close, with one being seen on the other side of the island in 2008 and another in the bay in 1991. Photo-identification images have been passed on to the Peninsula Valdes catalogue to determine whether the individuals are in their record.

James Robbins



Here at Bird Island we find all kinds of things washed up on our small pebbled beaches, everything from jellyfish to planks of wood and the occasional bit of treasure. Since arriving I have tried to walk the beach in front of the station every day to help clear it of man-made debris: rope, bottles, polystyrene (cursed stuff), wood of all shapes and sizes, pieces of plastic worn over time and now unrecognisable as to their original use. Almost every day a new bit washes up.

Happily, it is not all detritus: there are treasures waiting to be found. Seal tags, bird rings, penguin tags, positioning devices and radio transmitters have all been deployed in the past. Some of these items occasionally wash up as a welcome byproduct of my tidying-up. Jokes have been made about the 'Yorkshireman not being able to miss something shiny on the ground just in case it's money'. But the beaches are cleaner so it's all ok!

An albatross ring from Lance Tickell's time in the 1960s is my best find so far. This was topped recently by Tim, who found a seal location tag that should be able to tell us where the animal had been for the last six years or at least until the tag fell off.

From time to time we all come back with bits and pieces to be looked up in the database. Occasionally we send the information back to Cambridge for checking.

Ian Storey

The Albatross

Of all the interesting objects which present themselves to the eye of the voyager in the southern hemisphere, the albatross is among the most noteworthy. Apart from its relieving the monotony of the watery expanse, this bird, by its extraordinary characteristics, seldom fails of exciting a lively degree of astonishment in the spectator—for what can be thought of a bird which apparently requires neither rest nor sleep? It is perhaps owing to this peculiarity that sailors and others have regarded the albatross with mingled feelings of awe and wonder: its presence was an omen, but rather of good than evil.

Now upon Australian seas,
Wafted by the tropic breeze,
We salute the southern cross,
Watch the wondrous albatross—
Circling round in orbits vast,
Pausing now above the mast,
Laving now his snowy breast
Where the billows sleeping rest.
Now he skims the surface o'er,
Rising, falling evermore:
Floating high on stillest wing,
Now he seems a guardian thing,
Now a messenger of wrath,
Cleaving swift his airy path;
Bearing o'er the liquid plain
Warning of the hurricane.
Oh thou wild and wondrous bird,
Viewing thee, my thought is stirred.
Round and round the world thou goest,
Ocean solitude thou knowest—
Into trackless wastes hast flown,
Which no eye save thine hath known:
Ever tireless—day or night;
Calm or tempest—ceaseless flight.
Albatross, I envy thee
Oft thy soaring pinions free;
For we deem the realms of air
Too ethereal for care.
Gladness as of endless springs
Seems to me is born with wings.
Thou canst rise and see the sun,
When his course to us is done:
A moral here may us engross,
Thou the teacher—albatross!

Chambers's Edinburgh Journal, November 3, 1849

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